



# GLOBAL POLIO ERADICATION

## WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM?

Polio, once the leading cause of permanent disability in the United States, remains a substantial cause of disability in polio-endemic countries. As of February 2003, a provisional total for 2002 of 1,878 confirmed cases of paralytic polio were reported to the World Health Organization (WHO). Challenges remain as we strive to stop poliovirus circulation and certify the eradication of polio. Until polio is eradicated in every country, it remains a threat to children in polio-free countries. Fortunately, more than 190 countries and territories are polio-free, and the disease is now confined to parts of seven countries in South Asia and Africa. Through worldwide polio eradication, this scourge can be removed forever, relieving tremendous human suffering.

## WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

- CDC has provided epidemiologic, laboratory, and programmatic expertise, and funding support to help polio-endemic countries with polio eradication activities in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).
- **Vaccine Delivery:** During 2002, CDC contributed 650 million doses of oral polio vaccine, through UNICEF, to eradicate polio.
- **National Immunization Days:** CDC helps countries to conduct their National Immunization Days (NIDs). During these activities, every child under 5 years of age receives two doses of oral polio vaccine, one month apart, regardless of their prior immunization status.
- **Technical Assistance and Staff Support:** A total of 25 CDC professional staff is assigned to partner agencies, mainly WHO and UNICEF, in critical positions within the global project. Moreover, CDC's Atlanta-based staff travel extensively to provide technical assistance to regions and countries.
- **Stop Transmission of Polio (STOP) Teams:** Professionals, including CDC staff, with experience in epidemiology and surveillance from all around the world are trained at CDC and sent to polio-endemic countries to help with surveillance as well as the planning and evaluation of NIDs. Since January 1999, 426 STOP team members have participated in 3-month assignments in 39 different countries.
- **Surveillance:** The CDC and the Global Polio Eradication Initiative partners have intensified activities to develop active surveillance for acute flaccid paralysis especially in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Angola, Egypt and other countries in Asia and Africa.
- **Laboratory Support:** The CDC assists WHO in building global polio and measles laboratory networks, and serves as a WHO Global Specialized Reference Laboratory for polio. To date, there are 147 laboratories in the global polio network.

*Example of program in action:* Since early 1999, CDC has provided short-term consultants to help with efforts to eradicate polio in Bangladesh. As a result, disease tracking has improved, and poliovirus circulation appears to have been stopped; the last confirmed case of polio occurred in 2000.

## WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

The Global Polio Eradication Initiative has established the goal that by 2005 each of the six WHO regions would either be certified as polio-free or will be in the process of certification. CDC will continue to fight against polio by collaborating with partners to improve surveillance and increase the number and quality of National Immunization Days, so that disease transmission is interrupted in the remaining seven endemic countries. CDC will provide scientific assistance to improve monitoring and documentation necessary to certify that polio eradication has occurred. CDC will continue to be a leader in the development and implementation of global plans for laboratory containment of polioviruses. Finally, CDC is leading research and consensus development efforts to determine the best strategies for stopping polio vaccinations in the post-eradication era.

For more information on this and other CDC programs, visit [www.cdc.gov/programs](http://www.cdc.gov/programs).

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